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WESTERN CIVILIZATION AND BIRTH-RATE.
—DISCUSSION.

FRANK A. FETTER: The famous proposition of Malthus concerning population is always fallacious and always confusing in social inquiry, and ought therefore to be laid away finally in the collection of outgrown illusions. The proposition that population tends to increase faster than the means of subsistence is ambiguous nonsense. The word "tendency" has two meanings, varying according to the context. As applied to a force, "tendency" indicates merely the direction in which the force is exerted, no matter in what direction the body moves. Thus gravitation has a tendency to bring down the rising balloon, and wind has a tendency to check the motion of the advancing steamship. In this sense the reproductive power of mankind has a tendency to increase the population. But this tells nothing of the actual movement of population. That is the resultant of many forces tending in various directions. In this sense "tendency" cannot correctly be applied to population as the number of persons. As applied to a thing passively acted upon, the word "tendency" indicates the predominating direction of movement. In this sense "tendency" is properly applied to population, but only when in fact the number is increasing or decreasing. The mischievous confusion of the Malthusian proposition lies in its mingling of these two inconsistent meanings; population with a power of reproduction tending to increase the birth-rate is easily shifted in meaning to population as an arithmetic resultant pushed inevitably over the precipice of misery and starvation.

It is time to do away with this old jugglery of words, and look at the subject in the clearer light of the doctrine

of biologic evolution. Nature has provided a "factor of safety" in the reproductive power of mankind. Impulse and physical capacity are greater than is needed to maintain or slowly to increase the population under favorable economic conditions. This surplus power has insured two results for humanity: first, it saved capable families and tribes from extinction in the vicissitudes of war, pestilence, and famine; secondly, it gave an excess of births in the more capable strains, and thus secured an indispensable condition of progress. Broadly viewed, this factor of safety has been none too large for these tasks. With greater security of life it now is excessive in many individuals, and must to a large extent be sternly repressed, or tempered by education and by selective breeding of the race.

This suggests the main criticism which I should like to make upon the leading paper. That paper dismisses too lightly the thought that the birth-rate is limited, roughly speaking, in proportion to the ability and cultivation of the families. The ignorant, the improvident, the feeble-minded, are contributing far more than their quota to the next generation. Professor Ross recognizes somewhat this danger, but leaves a far too comforting final impression. We ought not to underestimate this danger, or overestimate the likelihood of automatic remedial forces. To Professor Ross the problem seems but a passing one, and "the lower strata are coming or may be brought within reach of the influence of moderate multiplication." He concludes with the soothing assurance that "the undoubted evils in the train of restriction appear to be minor, or transient, or self-limiting, or curable."

This opinion can be indorsed only when the emphasis is placed strongly upon the purposeful action of society, and not upon automatic relief, upon "may be brought,"

and upon "curable," and very little upon "are coming," "transient," and "is limiting." In barbaric times the stronger and swifter conquered and survived; and the early social institutions of polygamy, patriarchal concubinage, war, and the capture of women favored the survival of ability. But to-day superior intellectual and economic power contributes, not to offspring, but to sterilized scholarship, barren selfishness, and social display. It is more true to-day than ever, as the Frenchman said, that all the big families live in little houses and all the little families live in big houses.

In the lower strata of society it is the abler individuals that are reached by the appeal to ambition. Democracy hastens their extinction by enabling them to rise from the prolific ranks where caste has held them, to those circles where success or frivolous enjoyment limits the family burden. The practice of limiting families spreads downward in the same way and at the same rate that the mountains are being washed into the ocean. Before either process is effected, the world will end.

The paper mentions but one recent social change which tends definitely and positively to reduce the families of the unskilled classes, namely, child-labor legislation. Such laws as these incidentally and unintentionally have operated in that way. It is to the extension of such purposeful regulative measures that we must look for a remedy and not to the "economic harmonies." The whole structure of civilization is in a sense artificial, and the whole social process of limiting the physiologically possible birth-rate, is artificial. Its regulation in the future must be by artificial social agencies consciously chosen. Unless effective means are found to check the degeneration of the race, the noontide of humanity's greatness is nigh, if not already passed. Our optimism

must be based, not upon *laissez faire*, but upon the vigorous application of science, humanity, and legislative art to the solution of the problem. Great changes of thought are impending, and these will include the elimination of the unfit, the establishment of qualifications for marriage, the education of parents, and the conscious improvement of the race. Under the touch of the new science of eugenics, many of our most perplexing social problems will disappear, making possible that better democracy which we are just beginning to seek.

WILLIAM B. BAILEY: Emphasis seems to have been placed on the proper point when great weight was given to the growth of the spirit of democracy as affecting the birth-rate. When status instead of contract determined the position of the laborer, there was little incentive to foresight, since social advancement was extremely difficult. One by one the ties which bound men to the soil or to their occupation were cut away, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century labor became mobile. By the application of steam power to transportation and manufacture, the ability of the laborer to change his residence or occupation was increased. But while this growth in freedom brought many rights to the individual, he incurred at the same time certain duties. While he had been freed from the payment of dues to a superior, he had lost all claim to his bounty. His social salvation lay in his own hands.

With this increase in the responsibility of the individual has come an enlargement of the field for ambition. The great prizes in life are open to all, but for their attainment great sacrifice is required. Present enjoyment must be deferred and every energy strained to gain the final goal. Every handicap must be thrown aside in order

to reach the next round of the social ladder. The more ambitious the individual the greater the sacrifice demanded. To a considerable proportion of the population of the western world the presence of a large number of children in the household is considered one of the greatest barriers to social and economic advancement. Therefore, either by deferment of marriage or by restriction of fecundity, the size of the family must be kept within the limits granted by the courtesy of ambition.

In a new country, where agriculture is profitable and land plentiful, the action of this motive is for a time obscured. For the clearing of forests and the planting and harvesting of crops, where hired labor is obtained with difficulty, a numerous family is an economic utility. When the land under cultivation is found insufficient to utilize the laboring force of the growing community, or the sons wish to establish households of their own, they can take and clear adjoining land and gain a position as good as that of their father. Such a population is usually virile, fecund, and prosperous. As the country becomes populated, cities spring up to meet the demands of commerce and manufacture. Many who are not fitted for or attracted to agriculture find ample field for their ambition in urban life. The presence of this vast New World enabled Europe to preserve its customary high birth-rate without accompanying famine and pestilence. Millions of the surplus and more energetic population left for the new lands. At the same time the development of transportation enabled the Old World to obtain its food supplies from the immense stretches of fertile land over-sea, while utilizing much of its natural increase in the development of manufacture. One result of this system has been to render farming unprofitable in many sections of the Old World, and to increase the migration toward the

cities, causing in places an actual depopulation of the rural districts. This is apparent even in the North Atlantic section of this country.

Such a complete change in the economic condition of Europe caused the world to doubt for the time the existence of the laws of Malthus. But they were still on Nature's statute-book, although there was little cause for their enforcement. While we were beginning to wonder why the old repressive measures had lost their force, we saw that man was taking the solution of the problem into his own hands. It seems unlikely that the more highly civilized nations of the western world will ever again allow famine to limit the numbers of the population.

But the members of the different social groups do not reproduce with equal rapidity. There seems to be grave danger that too great a proportion of the increase of the population will come from the lower classes. The size of the family seems to vary inversely with the social ambition. When the individual is keenly alive to the opportunities for advancement, and anxious that the position of his children shall be at least equal to, if not better than, his own, the number of children will not be so great that it will be impossible for him to equip them properly for their life-work. But where a spirit of hopelessness and sullen resignation is widespread, there is but little thought given to the prospects of the next generation; for the children could not easily be worse off than the parents. The need or cupidity of the parents forces the children into the mines or factories at the earliest possible age, regardless of the effect upon the intelligence or health of the coming generation. As a consequence of this short-sighted action on the part of the individual, society has been compelled to abandon its *laissez-faire* policy, and pass certain paternalistic measures. The

result of the sanitary and factory legislation of the past half-century has doubtless tended to reduce the size of the family among the lower classes. There will continue to be thousands who will breed blindly, regardless of the future of their children; but compulsory education and the opportunities which are offered at present for intellectual improvement should make the coming generation realize more fully the duties which they owe to themselves and their children.

We have been told by Professor Ross that those countries with the teeming millions, where the population is at the limit of the food supply, will be irresistibly impelled to go forth and possess the uninhabited portions of the earth. This is doubtless true, and they are welcome to them. When the European states began their policy of colonization, the force of the preventive checks to the growth of population was little appreciated. It was felt that some outlet must be found for the surplus population, and it was thought that trade followed the flag. Already the masses of the people are beginning to groan under the burden of taxation caused by the expenditures upon these colonies and to question their utility. There is no assurance that the country which is the biggest is the greatest or the happiest.

But when we come to consider the possibility that the vast hordes may descend upon the civilized nations more happily situated than themselves, and wrest from them the favored locations they enjoy, this is a different matter. True, food for cannon is cheap. But cannons are not cheap. And a nation which is at the limit of its food supply, with the misery and burdens which this implies, is not in a good position to endure the tremendous expenditure which a modern campaign demands. In this struggle the nation which enjoys a safe margin from want possesses a decided advantage.

There are certainly dangers connected with a too great restriction of the birth-rate, but they are small compared with those of an excessive rate, and he who is not confident that an equilibrium will be somehow established, with less misery than the earlier dispensation demanded, underestimates the power of the genetic force.

HENRY C. POTTER: It is a misfortune, to me of pathetic proportions, that I am obliged to add these few words to this discussion without the best of all preparations for uttering them—I mean the privilege of having heard those who have preceded me; and I desire, therefore, first of all to express my keen regret for the blunder—the fault of it is no one's but my own—which has unexpectedly deprived me of the privilege of being here a listener. For no graver problem could be presented for discussion by a sociological society than that which concerns our “western civilization.” There was a time when that phrase had hardly any other than a playful signification. If there was a civilization that was western rather than eastern or southern, it was supposed to be that British civilization which has had its triumph and has won its wonderful victories by other forces—racial, civic, ethical—than those which are supposed to be peculiar to these shores; and it must be remembered that when, after the Revolutionary War, our ancestors undertook to construct, out of the original colonies, a republic, there were estimable and not unfriendly observers in older lands who were not slow to prophesy the speedy extinction here of *all* civilization. It did not happen. There were three great strains that mingled in the settlement of the parent colonies, and their influence cannot easily be exaggerated. One of these was Dutch, another was British, and another was French-Huguenot; and all

of these stood for certain great ideas which, whatever may be the ultimate development of this republic, laid its foundations. And in each of these, in time, there was a clear and profound conviction as to the august office, authority, and origin of the family. I do not know that, if the founders of the republic could have seen so far forward as the modern doctrine of evolution, they would invariably have challenged it; for men of science then, who were very far from being agnostics, recognized—some of them, at any rate—the inexorable operation, ordinarily, of great natural laws. But behind the natural laws they saw a divine law and a divine Mind; and in the Bible they believed that they had an expression of that Mind at once authoritative and infallible. Well, they read in that Bible: “Children are an heritage from the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. Happy is the man who has a quiver full of them” (Psalm 127: 3-5). And so a large family—fatherhood, and especially motherhood—came to be regarded as part of a sacred calling and the great households of children with which American tradition is familiar were a note of republican glory and virtue.

That those earlier ideas and ideals have widely ceased to prevail there can be no doubt; and that they had in them theories of obligation, or privilege, that were not wholly true there can, I think, be as little doubt. In the begetting and rearing of children, as truly as of inferior creatures, there may be a valid place for the precept *Multum, non multa*; and the first question for the citizen is not so much, How many children are born in the republic? as the question, Under what conditions are they being born and reared, and what is the promise of their maturity to the well-being of the state?

And this brings me to the peril which, as you will

doubtless have heard long before these words are read to you, menaces our land to-day. We are told, on the one hand, that the republic is being inundated with immigrants from all parts of the world, who are fertile, but not intelligent; material in their hungers, but ignoble in their aspirations; the product of conditions often cruel and brutal in other lands; and not likely to be unselfish or spiritually minded here. We are told that, multiplying like rabbits, they will soon outnumber the native stock, and that no more urgent sociological question can challenge our best intelligence than that which confronts us here.

I partly believe it; but I do not despair either of the republic or of the maintenance in it of the higher ideals of the family. It may be that we shall strive in vain to re-erect upon its throne that august sovereignty of the family which deified fatherhood, and which slaughtered women in the interest of bearing sixteen children! I am not prepared, at any rate, to say that some of those earlier theories of huge families were anything better than the selfish incarnation of unconsciously hypocritical ideas (for there is such a thing as "unconscious hypocrisy") disguising itself as religious duty. But, the moment that this is said, it must also be remembered that what somebody has aptly called "shirking the penalties of marriage" has begotten among us a group of nameless vices, of which prenatal infanticide is only one, and which deserve alike our indignant reprobation and our hostility.

And then, let us remember that, in order to secure worthy American children for the republic, we must have worthy parents. If it be true that there are swarming to these shores multitudes out of many lands, whose conception of life is little more than the merest animalism, we may not forget that these, of whatever race or blood

they are, are our brothers and sisters, and that ours must be the sacred office of striving to lift them up. You and I believe that this is a land, not only of great ideals, but of the greatest. Let us show that we believe in them, by making them to live and burn in the breasts of all who touch these shores.

EMILY BALCH: The selective action of a birth-rate which is decreasing rapidly at the top is, of course, a most familiar subject. To that is added, in our country, the fact that the selection is not only a selection in favor of lower economic and social classes, but also very markedly a selection in favor of the foreign blood. Already in the United States the white population of native parentage is only just over half for the whole United States, counting equally and including the states which receive little immigration as well as the states which receive much. Now, within this body the native-born have fewer marriageable women; the marriageable women marry later; fewer of them marry at all; many of them are childless; those of them that have children have fewer children—not only have fewer children, but have fewer surviving children. The death-rate lessens the difference between the number of births, but it does not wipe it out. It still remains true that the native woman rears fewer children than the foreign-born. The figures of the new Massachusetts census, which are published only in part in the preliminary bulletin, are growing to be extremely foreign, and one interesting point is brought out in regard to the shorter child-bearing period of the native women. This period is for the foreign-born women over eight years, and for the native women only five years. Respecting the influence which Mr. Ross has given the family factor, limited even when the number of children desired is

present, one element is that the lower birth-rate may generalize itself, and there are reasons to expect this in homogeneous countries, like England, where this has already taken place to a considerable degree, the rural counties and smaller places feeling the effect of this new change very markedly. In Germany it has not yet taken place. There the effect is maintained very nearly in the great centers; but there is no reason why it should not spread to the country and the poorer classes, because the population is essentially homogeneous. With us there is not only all that, the higher birth-rate among the lower social and economic classes, the reasons for which I will not discuss because we all have it in mind, but there is also a racial and religious stratification running with the economic and social. Of course, that is particularly true in a population like that of Massachusetts, where the population is so much diversified. Where the Germans and Scandinavians make the population this is less true.

I think there must be in everybody's acquaintance someone to suggest that there are a great many childless families involuntarily—a great many families of a few children where more children would be most heartily welcome. It is a well-known fact that when the habits of any animal are disturbed its fertility falls off, so that many animals do not continue to breed in captivity. It seems to be a parallel fact that all types of men are not fertile under civilization. Possibly men are not naturally, quite apart from any other interference, highly fertile under the most highly civilized conditions. What are you going to do about it? We have some extremely interesting suggestions in the discussion which has recently been going on in the London *Times*, Sidney Webb starting it last March, which brought the whole question on the carpet again so vigorously. Sidney Webb, of course,

lays great stress on the economic factor, and believes that society should take a share, and that we should quickly come to social endowment of motherhood. Now it seems to me obvious that, in the shape in which Mr. Webb proposes that, it would be really by no means an improvement, as far as the selective aspect of the matter goes. If you believe that the decrease of the birth-rate has gone so far that it is a serious matter as a total, then, of course, if you want simply to have more people, to have any kind of people, depraved people quite as well as any other class, measures like this, like feeding school children, are a good thing; but if you believe it is important to have not only more people, but most particularly to have more of the right kind of people, then any measure of encouragement should be most carefully selective in character.

The first meeting of the sociological society in England, as you are doubtless aware, was largely given up to the discussion of eugenics by Francis Galton. He discussed the matter in a most conservative and at the same time suggestive way. One of the newspaper correspondents, following on this general discussion, suggested that anybody who chose, nobody to be compelled, but any persons who voluntarily chose might present themselves at an office for examination and get a marking and get themselves rated on intelligence, and in proportion to this rating get a subsidy for children, each subsidy to be for each child, but the rate varying according to their rating. Obviously we are in Utopia when we discuss anything like that as an immediate policy. But it is a kind of thing that people are certainly going to have to take into account in the future.

It does seem to me that there is a certain turn of the tide already in the upper layer, measuring by social and moral refinement; that there is a good deal of force mak-

ing for a greater desire for marriage, and happiness in marriage, and for larger families. It seems to me that there is a certain element of thinking, a certain tendency, perhaps, to think the profession, the life, of the married woman in some degree less intellectual or less tremendous in its possibilities than that of the unmarried woman at its best. This, it seems to me, comes through the fact that the modern woman of the highest type has quite definitely turned her force in the other direction; and her new utilization of health and love of it, not health as not being sick, but health as being a splendid living creature; her new interest in children, not only in the quite simple, inevitable way, but the tremendous interest in them that child-study points to, and the tremendous sense of their being the future citizens—all that means a new value and a readiness to sacrifice anything to it. It seems to me that there is a new sense in the community of approbation of and admiration for a happy father and mother and a big and happy family. All of this does not mean, by necessity, enormous families, of the Plymouth graveyard type, where I once noticed a stone which said: "Here lies So-and-so with twenty small children." It is obvious if, say, nine people out of ten married, that is, you had forty-five married couples in every hundred of the population, and say five of the forty-five had no children, and the others had each raised on an average five children, you would have double your population in a generation. And we have left a margin for the people who are not fitted for marriage, or who are not capable of marrying, or who have had life-histories and do not care to marry; and the people who had one or two children could easily be balanced by the people who had six or seven children. It does not mean necessarily to have a birth-rate which shall keep the margin growing, but should keep a margin

which is necessary, not only to colonize the waste places of the earth, but to supply a certain contingent element, which, so far as we can see, until we get very much farther on in volition, we are going to need as an element pushing us all forward toward progress.

I. M. RUBINOW: It is hardly necessary to say that in his able paper Professor Ross has touched upon one of the most important problems of society, and one of the most difficult to solve. The speaker is certainly to be congratulated upon the fearlessness with which he has attacked the problem, not hesitating to call a spade a spade.

On the other hand, one cannot help thinking that he may have exaggerated the extent of the opposition which his views will create; for, while the numerous classes he has mentioned in the end of his paper may have a great deal to say against his theories, the undisputed fact is that it is these very classes which, in this country at least, have made Neomalthusianism more than an abstract theory.

The facts quoted in the paper are undisputed; the decreasing birth-rate is admitted by all statisticians; nevertheless, it seems to me that in trying to prove his point Professor Ross has overestimated one cause and minimized all others. That the decreasing birth-rate is partly due to the exercise of the human will in marital relations cannot be denied, but is this the only explanation? Can it really be asserted that there is no marked weakening of the inclination to marry, if in this country the percentage of unmarried women between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four has increased within the short period of ten years (1890-1900) from 16 to 18 per cent.?

Another important fact is waived aside, and to my

opinion unjustly, namely, the effect of the postponement of marriage. That this factor, by reducing the limits of the child-bearing period, necessarily reduces the possible maximum of births, needs no demonstration. The family of twenty children can no more be met with. But it is also a well-known physiological fact that the chances of conception are very much smaller with women who remain unmarried until thirty, and that among them the proportion of sterile marriages is considerably higher. While it may be difficult to calculate the force of these factors exactly, there can be no doubt that they exist, and are becoming stronger, so that the birth-rate of civilized nations is limited by other factors than that which Professor Ross emphasizes.

Now, are these other factors sufficient to obtain the results necessary from the Malthusian point of view? I meet this with another question: Is it really necessary to obtain such results? Professor Ross accepts the Malthusian doctrine in its entirety; and that seems to be the weakest point in his argument. It is hardly possible to enter here into an extensive examination of that doctrine, nor is it necessary, after the interesting analysis given by Professor Fetter; but many of the statements made in the paper are somewhat startling.

I wonder how many students of history will agree with the generalization that most of the wars have been caused by overpopulation, or that poverty and class antagonism are due to an excessive birth-rate, and that these evils could be cured by reducing the birth-rate. Surely there is no dearth of class-antagonism in France, where the reduced birth-rate has become a grave national problem. The poverty of the Russian peasant can hardly be ascribed to overpopulation, especially in the Malthusian sense of insufficient food-supply, so long as Russia con-

tinues to export millions of bushels of grain to feed half of prosperous Europe. No matter what the advantages of Malthus' views as an abstract theory in mathematics, their invocation is peculiarly out of date after a fifty-years' period of falling prices of cereals, from which the agriculture of the world is just beginning to recover. And when one thinks of the barbarous condition of agriculture throughout the world, the danger seen by Malthus vanishes into the dim future concerning which speculation is as fruitless as it would be to worry about the possible exhaustion of the coal supply.

Thus the advantages of a reduced birth-rate from the economic point of view are problematic, to say the least. On the other hand, the disadvantages and dangers have already assumed a very serious aspect. First there is the danger of depopulation. That a falling of the birth-rate below the death-rate is undesirable, Professor Ross admits; but he meets the difficulty in a rather arbitrary way. "The family to be standardized," he says, "is not the family of one to three, but the family of four to six children." This, however, begs the entire question. For it is not a theory, but a condition, which confronts us. And the condition is that where Neomalthusianism is actually practiced, the family hardly ever reaches four, and never six, children; that two children, or even one child, if not absolute sterility, becomes the ideal; and that the number of children in the Neomalthusian family can be measured only by the frequency of breaks in the family system. This is the condition that France has to deal with; and this is the condition that we in this country have to deal with—only in this country the enormous immigration and the admixture of races of more normal habits obscure the actual gravity of the situation.

No less lightly does Professor Ross meet the great

danger of deterioration of the type. "Let the lower nations and the lower races also become adherents of Neomalthusianism," he says. How probable the conversion of the African or the Asiatic to this scientific practice may be, is a question not to be answered at once; but if the gradual introduction of these methods has so rapidly reacted upon the growth of population, what will be the results if the methods are to become universal?

Finally, a great, and perhaps the greatest, objection remains—that which the physiologist and the physician would indicate. It is to be regretted that some prominent representative of the medical profession is not here to discuss this problem in the light of medical experience. But even the every-day family physician knows the evils of Neomalthusianism. They are not accidental, but inherent in the practice. No preventive device is secure and harmless to the man or the woman, or to both; and it may be said, as a general rule, that the poorer the family, the more injurious are the methods used. Thus Neomalthusian victims are already filling the reception rooms of our gynecologists, of our alienists, and even the wards of hospitals for the insane. The layman will find a good picture of this aspect of the problem in Zola's great novel *Fecondité*; for, while the portrayal there is somewhat concentrated, it contains not a single incident that every family physician has not met in his practice.

The sociologist must meet the situation squarely. The practice of limiting the number of children is bound to spread, for in modern society the causes of this tendency are incurable. Children are an impediment, not only to the climber, to whom the first child is often a greater hindrance than the fourth, but to every man aiming at a higher standard of living. The disadvantage of parentage is still greater for woman, to whom it means danger

to life, bodily injury, and a long life of toil and worry; and the problem is especially acute now for the middle-class woman, because in earlier days the hired service of other women helped her to shift most of the burden of motherhood upon other shoulders. For all these causes modern society knows no relief.

The motherly instinct, however, is almost universal. But this instinct does not demand a very large number of children; and economic conditions, arbitrary regulations, and conventional morality force a great many women into a celibate or childless existence.

If a purely theoretical solution to this grave problem were desired, one might say that, if sexual life were not enforced upon the unwilling woman, as it was in the days of savagery with a club, and in our days of western civilization by means of the marriage contract, there would be no need of the fear of overpopulation; and were the maternal instinct of all women satisfied with a limited number of children, there would be no danger of depopulation. These suggestions may sound shocking, but they are not new. For the right of motherhood *per se* has already been advocated by German feminists, and the onerous obligations of enforced wifehood are silently objected to by thousands of women.

This solution is, of course, worthless under modern social conditions, based upon the economic and sexual dependence of woman upon man. The modern family, under the disguise of a sanctified ideal of marital fidelity, as flippant Bernard Shaw has effectively expressed it, permits a husband to commit rape upon his wife. The scientific sociologist, however, need not be told that modern society and the modern family do not possess the virtue of absolute finality.

C. W. A. VEDITZ: Two points have been merely touched upon which occur to me as having a fundamental bearing upon the subjects discussed in Professor Ross's paper. The first of them is so plain as to require nothing more than statement.

When in any family the number of children is so great as to exceed the number which could be properly fed, properly clothed, and properly cared for, this excess of numbers is apt to mean, not merely the extinction of the surplus children, but the underfeeding and undertraining of all of them. If, for instance, the income of a given family is just sufficient to rear decently three children, and five are put into the world, the probable consequence is not the total neglect of the two extra children, but insufficient care for all five. Too large families, therefore, mean, to say the least, an economic waste greater than that involved in the ultimate extinction of the excessive members. Professor Ross, however, appears to suggest that the presence of a large number of children in a poor family entails a selective process which weeds out the physically and mentally unfit and results in the survival of 'the fittest'. I do not think that this is the case either in the large families or in the small families, or that it is mainly in the richer families with few children that the weaker offspring are given the special care that insures their survival. For whether the family is large or small, whether it contains three children or ten, whether the parents are rich or poor, it is as likely in the one case as in the other that the physically and intellectually weak are not weeded out in infancy, but kept alive by dint of lavish care, which in the case of a family of ten children with poor parents necessarily involves a corresponding neglect of the naturally stronger and brighter children.

The second point of equally fundamental importance is the manifest conflict of interests between the individual family and the community at large. The community wants soldiers, it wants laborers, it wants numerical strength. In France systematic endeavors have long been made by both private and public organizations to prevent depopulation. But it has frequently been noted there that the very leaders of the movement for raising the birth-rate are among those who in their private lives pursue that policy of "intelligent egoism" which limits the family to one or two children. They want the population to be increased, but they prefer that their own families remain small and that their fellow-citizens "save the nation from extinction." This conflict of interests has been strikingly brought out in recent French literature by a score of novelists and playwrights, of whom the foremost is probably Henri Brieux, the author of *Maternité*. If it be in the interest of society to have a relatively higher birth-rate, I fail to note any fallacy in the argument that if society is to reap the advantages from large families, then society should at least bear a large part of the burden involved by large families.

WALTER E. WILLCOX: Professor Ross's paper suggests the possibility of agreement among sociologists upon certain fundamental points involved in the problem of population. There is no time now to elaborate or discuss these points, which, it will be seen, lead us up to the question which the British Sociological Society has been considering the last two years, and which Francis Galton has done so much to bring within the range of serious discussion. These points, as I see them, are briefly as follows:

1. The increase of population among peoples of European stock during the last two centuries has been enormous and unprecedented.

2. This increase has not been due to any increase in the birth-rate, but rather to a decrease in the death-rate.

3. The decrease in the death-rate has been due to two main causes: first, an increased production of food, not only in Europe, but especially in other lands made tributary to European peoples; and, secondly, an increase in human control over diseases and causes of death not connected with the food supply.

4. While the second great cause of a decreased death-rate may continue to operate with undiminished vigor, the first seems likely to become less potent.

5. During the last half-century the birth-rate among peoples of European stock has tended to decrease, this tendency beginning to operate at different dates in different countries and in different classes of society, but being now well-nigh universal among the carriers of western civilization.

6. The primary cause of this decrease is that within the last half-century the western peoples have acquired for the first time the power to control the birth-rate and have exercised that power in accordance with their individual judgment.

7. In the decrease of the death-rate the interests of the individual striving to prolong both his own life and the lives of those dear to him, and the interests of society striving to reduce the sum-total of death in the community, have co-operated effectively toward a common end.

8. In the decrease of the birth-rate, on the other hand, there always may be, and doubtless often is, a conflict between the apparent or real interests of the individual or family and the real interests of society, the former

often indicating a balance of individual or family advantage in favor of a small family, the latter always indicating that it is for the welfare of man, as of any other form of life, to continue the species, so far as possible and as a rule through the agency of its best individuals.

9. This conflict of interests makes it possible, if not probable, that the decrease of the birth-rate resulting from considerations solely or mainly of individual or family welfare may be more rapid, either in the entire community or in parts of it, than the welfare of the society as a whole or of humanity justifies.

10. Under present conditions it seems probable that a nation may increase mainly from its weaker lines of descent, or at least may not gain as it might and should from its best lines. This change may extend even to races, and the white race lose the numerical predominance it has so recently acquired.

11. This possibility or probability raises a question of great sociological importance, whether a readjustment both ethical and economic is not needed and imminent, whereby the present and future birth-rate of the entire community or of the classes of pre-eminent social worth may be controlled less exclusively by the interests of the individual or the family, and more by the general interests of society, or whereby society may gradually modify the interests of the former class into closer agreement with its own.